

To check post-harvest wastage, PM launches Rs 1-lakh-crore agriculture infra fund

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The scheme, which was announced as part of the government's Rs 20 lakh crore Atmanirbhar Bharat package in response to the Covid pandemic in May, was approved by the Union Cabinet on July 8. It will be implemented over 10 years — from 2020 to 2029.

Calling the wastage of post-harvest produce “a big problem”, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday launched a Rs 1-lakh-crore central financing scheme under the Agriculture Infrastructure Fund that is aimed at helping farmers and agri-entrepreneurs build “post-harvest agriculture infrastructure”.

The scheme, which was announced as part of the government's Rs 20 lakh crore Atmanirbhar Bharat package in response to the Covid pandemic in May, was approved by the Union Cabinet on July 8. It will be implemented over 10 years — from 2020 to 2029.

Under the scheme, Rs 1 lakh crore will be provided by banks and financial institutions as loans to farmers, Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS), Farmer Producers Organisations (FPOs), Self Help Groups (SHG) and others for building “community farming assets” and “post-harvest agriculture infrastructure”.

“These assets will enable farmers to get greater value for their produce as they will be able to store and sell at higher prices, reduce wastage, and increase processing and value addition,” said an official statement.

"Today, only 30 days after (the) Cabinet formally approved the scheme, the first sanction of over Rs 1,000 crore was made to over 2,280 farmer societies," the statement said.

Launching the scheme, the Prime Minister said, "It will help in creating better storage and modern cold storage chains in villages. The scheme will also create employment opportunities in villages."

Saying wastage of post-harvest produce "hurts the farmer and causes a lot of damage to the country", the PM, referring to the recent amendments to the Essential Commodities Act, said, "To deal with this, legal hurdles are being removed on one hand and farmers are being given direct help on the other."

He said the Essential Commodities Act was a reason why good warehouses could not be built in villages and agro-based industries could not get encouragement.

"Today, the Agriculture Infrastructure Fund has been launched so that farmers will be able to create modern facilities for storage in their villages," he said, adding that farmers will get a 3 per cent interest rebate on loans provided under this scheme.

The PM interacted virtually with members of three agriculture credit societies from Karnataka, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh, states that are among the initial beneficiaries of the agri infra fund scheme.

"At the same event, the Prime Minister also released the sixth installment under the PM-KISAN scheme of Rs 17,000 crore to nearly 8.5 crore farmers," said the official statement.

Source: Indian Express